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The Visit

As he tried to enter the building, wheelchairs hemmed him round, the women having swung them into his legs with unbelievable force. "I'm Claude Harrelson," he laughed while trying to extract. "My mother is Mrs Harrelson. On the seventh floor!"

"Don't you try to fool me, Richard!" screamed one whose neck was horribly bent, the words bouncing from the pavement to meet ticking noises coming off her wheelchair's underseat battery.

"His own mother!" scorned a fat woman plopped in a handlebar number, her skewed wig of a red not seen in nature. Others echoed her, popping up in their aluminum, mostly manual, chairs. Claude nearly broke free, the rows of letter boxes and

the security TVs of the lobby beckoning.

"He was never funny until he married that bitch," sneered Crooked Neck, who had maneuvered behind him and now buckled his knees with a motorized thrust.

"Excuse me ma'am. You don't know who I married, if anyone."

She had pinned his foot, and, as he ripped clear, the vehicle rolled slowly downhill, sparks and smoke flying from its hulking battery. The woman, able only to mutter as to his ungratefulness, couldn't stop the heavy chair, tilting now towards the chrysanthemum bed and threatening to deposit her on the sidewalk. Claude felt obliged to give chase down the insanely gradual pitch, past a blue mailbox and a standing harpy waving a letter who shrilled, "Millard! Look what I was doing! You can stop me now if you got the guts!"

He got to the chair just as it snapped into some briars. It proved heavy to pull out and heavier to push back up the incline. Panting, Claude had leisure to discover that the woman at the mailbox had sunk to her knees and was wearing a floor length nightgown covered with rosettes. "It's too late now, she sobbed. "Everything is."

Just as he was wedging Crooked Neck between two other wheelchairs, ("You ruined my chair, Bright Ass! How can I get

upstairs for Bingo now?" he was also chastised by a white-jacketed doctor in a pencil moustache. Doors open on his BMW coupe from which Mozart slid across the buttery front seat, he had been counting out pills on the roof. "Life isn't the Keystone Kops my good young man. You have to be more careful."

Shortly, the physician dispensed wrapped prescriptions from a basket--to hands greedy and blue waving above the wheelchairs. "Now now! Enough for everyone my darlings!"

A black ambulance driver shaking a paper confronted Claude, requesting a clarification. "Fuckin Mrs Honderlee or some such? Look! Look!"

"I'm just here to see my mother when I got trapped into this wacky mess," Claude still panted. "Give me a break!"

The women, more emboldened by medication, shoved him into the driver who roared at Claude "Don't you fuckin shove me!" Claude found himself careening towards the doctor. And, in truth, could've stopped.

The surprised physician cut his lip on the open door of his BMW, glasses clattering over the roof, counterpointing Mozart.

The women shrieked louder than ever, a corkscrew humpback, declaring "He's no son of ours!"

"You are insane as well as irresponsible!" the doctor hissed at the suddenly lunatic-grinning Claude, before fetching

his glasses and wiping them methodically with a tissue. "And now will I hasten to cell-phone the police."

"Why not the National Guard? You can probably hasten them just as well!" Claude squealed.

The black driver shook his head. "Out of control, everything, and the young dude, he's completely lost it. Oh yeah!"

The woman from the mailbox had been crawling towards them on her knees, her nightgown pulling off her mottled shoulders. "It's too late now. It's all too late!" she wrenched.